

Valley Residents Deserve Kudos

by Commissioner Jeff Hatch-Miller

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It has been a tough month for Valley residents. In the wake of limited energy supplies in the hottest part of the year, Valley electric customers should be lauded for their impressive conservation efforts over the past few weeks. Rolling blackouts have been averted, thanks to the teamwork of the APS and SRP and their customers.

According to estimates, APS and SRP residential and business customers have shaved roughly as much as 350 MW off peak demand, which is enough power for 90,000 homes. That's an incredible feat considering that peak demand in the Valley can reach as high 10,000 MW during a typical hot humid day in July.

People are definitely changing their patterns of energy use. Both utilities have seen their customers shift their demand for energy away from peak hours by doing the following:

- Raising their thermostats one or two degrees,
- Turning off lights that are not needed,
- Operating their pool pumps in the evening, and
- Avoiding the use of appliances like washers, dryers and dishwashers during the afternoon hours.

Electricity supplies have been constrained since the fires damaged transformers at the Westwing and Deer Valley substations. Employees of APS and SRP are working around the clock to ensure that the Valley's energy needs are met. The Valley's transmission grid has been reworked to increase capacity to meet load growth as temperatures reached 100 degrees.

Utility crews successfully re-energized one the damaged transformer banks of the Westwing substation, completing the repairs ahead schedule. A replacement transformer has been located and is being delivered to Phoenix. At the Deer Valley substation, APS has found a spare transformer and will have it installed in few days. That substation should be fully operational by next week.

APS and SRP have said that consumer are heeding the call to reduce usage during the peak demand hours of 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Big-box retailers, manufacturers, small businesses, and government have also pitched in by dimming lights and raising thermostats.

So far, these conservation efforts have worked. However, Valley customers are still not out of the clear. In the coming weeks, forest fires and high temperatures will continue to pose a threat to the Valley's transmission capacity. Every weekday when energy use is at its peak, demand for power comes close to surpassing the current diminished capacity of APS and SRP.

With just a few more weeks of energy conservation, APS and SRP should have most of the power system working again. I believe the Valley's residents will continue to step up to the challenge. Together, we can do this.